

Mark Barnes

Luminescence

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Luminescence. The result of something that produces spontaneous light. The chemistry that normally defines that reaction is stretched, teased, pulled, pushed, and sometimes pounded by composer **Mark Barnes** on his latest album **Luminescence**. One thing we do know, the action is self-perpetuating. Outside forces hold little sway on the music as Barnes transmutes the light within into bold, dynamic experiences. The album is ten tracks of thrilling, ambitious ambient fare. You're gonna want to hold on for this one.

The first track, **An Angel's Return**, which reminds me of a scene out the original War of The Worlds, is *Winston Churchill* voicing an admonition over some pulsing, percussion soaked runs with a club mix feel. It's the sound of a strange heartbeat. Strong, vibrant, and determined.

Dance on the Moon is an exhilarating romp of whimsical riffs, a strong beat, and lots of energy. Mark's theme here suggests that gravity won't slow anyone down as they dance to their heart's content. The piano phrase is clean, almost bluesy; the inorganic chorus like refrain is firm, and the whole song is quite danceable. You can get your groove back with this one.

Where Did the Time Go shows Barnes softer side. The gentle chanson of very old style piano recalls not only the far past, but the recent past as all the ills of the world just seemed to hammer the body and the spirit. The music provides not only a breather, but a chance to start the healing process while the heart clutches those precious memories.

The chill returns in the tune **Luna Nocturna**. The voice of John Fitzgerald Kennedy over a tentative piano track and bass drone makes way for a kicking groove. Quavers of sound permeate the music and become the focus. The tempo is easy going as guitar sneaks in and has her say. The last third of the tune checks the box for mysterious intonation. Quite a variety on the track.

We hear the loons on the lake tuning up as the song **Morning Calls** starts up. The tune is a quiet ballad of clavier sounding notes and strumming guitars. An upright piano makes the scene and the main theme comes 'round again. In Barnes tune you can feel the warmth of the sun as she makes her daily appearance. Fire clouds make way for blue skies. A new day has begun.

Disquieting bass and a windswept sonic landscape are layered behind the words of scientist *Stephen Hawking* cautionary words on the title cut **Luminescence**. Barnes' supernatural tune of finding strength within is surrounded by glistening trills, tremulous synth runs, and organically charged strings. If we are the only intelligent life for a million light years around, then we can look forward to a lonely existence for a very long time.

Award winning composer Mark Barnes has garnered recognition for his albums all around North America. His ambient/electronic music delves into other genres, but sometimes defies description. Luminescence, using a variety of spoken word gems in combination with driving soundscapes, make his themes constantly interesting. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews